

ber of other villages amongst the Chiltern Hills where the same conditions as to water supply obtain.

A deep well might be bored at an expense which would represent a cost of under 10s. per cottage per annum for about thirty years. But the majority of the inhabitants have hitherto considered the pond water to be ample and satisfactory, and up till the present the schemes suggested for boring a deep well have been rejected on the grounds of expense, and on the assertion that no disease has been traced to the pond water. Am I right under these circumstances in stating that surface drainage water subjected to no process of filtration is essentially a dangerous and undesirable beverage, and that the comparatively good record held by the district as to health is no guarantee of future safety?

I should be glad if any correspondents who have extended experience in matters of village water supplies would offer an opinion.—I am, etc.,

CHARLES REINHARDT, M.D.Brux., L.S.A.Lond.
Southstoke, Oxfordshire, Sept. 28th.

VINEGAR AS AN ALLEGED CAUSE OF HEPATIC CIRRHOSIS.

SIR,—Some remarks made by me at the annual meeting in connection with the suspected causation of cirrhosis by the prolonged and excessive use of vinegar, and accurately reported on page 953 of the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL of October 1st, call for a further statement in the light of subsequent events. The patient upon whose case these remarks were based died after the fifty-third tapping, but the liver was not cirrhotic. The recurring ascites was connected with an unusual condition of the heart, a description of which is intended for future publication. The liver itself presented only slight fibroid changes and chronic congestion. My desire that this failure in diagnosis should not be the source of a misleading impression in connection with the etiology of cirrhosis must be my excuse for begging your insertion of correction.—I am, etc.,

Mayfair, W., Oct. 3rd.

WM. EWART.

SANITARY INSTITUTE CONGRESS.

SIR,—The newspaper reports of the Congress at Birmingham are in error in attributing to me a motion regarding sanitary administration in Ireland. The motion was made by Dr. J. H. Fergusson, Killygordon, Donegal. Your insertion of this correction will oblige.—I am, etc.,

Glasgow, Oct. 3rd.

JOHN C. McVAIL.

OBITUARY.

JAMES EDWARD TIERNEY AITCHISON, M.D., C.I.E.,
F.R.S.,

Indian Medical Service.

THE announcement of the death of Dr. Aitchison on September 30th, at the age of 63, will cause a feeling of profound regret and sorrow amongst a wide circle of friends. He had suffered for several years past from valvular disease of the heart; but the immediate cause of death was a biliary calculus, for which he was operated upon a couple of months ago.

The second son of Major James Aitchison, H.E.I.C.S., he was born at Neemuch, India, but received his education at home in the Grammar School, Dalkeith, and the Edinburgh Academy, afterwards entering the University of Edinburgh, where he graduated M.D. in 1856. He also became Licentiate and Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh.

In 1858 he entered the Honourable East India Company's service as Assistant Surgeon, and he married, in 1862, Eleanor Carmichael, daughter of Mr. R. Craig, Craigesk, N.B. In 1872 he was British Commissioner in Ladak; and six years later served with the 29th Punjab Regiment, N.I., in the Kurram Field Force, for which he received a medal and clasp. His appointment as Botanist to the above-named Force followed in 1879 to 1880; and in 1884-85 he was made Naturalist to the Afghan Delimitation Commission.

Some of his published works are: *Catalogue of the Plants of the Punjab and Sindh* (London, 1869); *Flora of Lahal* (*Journal of Linnean Society*, vol. x, 1869); *Vegetation of the Thelwar*

District of the Punjab (*Journal of Asiatic Society*); *Handbook of Trade Products of Leh* (Calcutta, 1874); *Flora of Hushiarpur* (*Journal of the Linnean Society*, vol. ii, 1869); *Flora of the Kurram Valley* (*Journal of the Linnean Society*, vol. xviii, 1881); *Botany of the Afghan Delimitation Commission* (*Trans. Linnean Soc.*, 1888); *The Zoology of the Afghan Delimitation Commission*; *Notes on the Products of Western Afghanistan and North-East Persia*; and other papers.

From this list it will be seen that his chief scientific work, outside the ordinary duties of a surgeon in the army, was in the sphere of botany. As a collector of specimens, few equalled him in describing the uses that the products of the soil were put to by the natives in whose countries they were found. It may have been this faculty, which he possessed in a high degree—a faculty of acute observation—and a desire, maybe, to enrich our own list of drugs, which led him in the first instance to study botany on the spot in those little-known regions to the north-west of India—Afghanistan, Beluchistan, and Persia. Opportunities such as these may present themselves to any surgeon in the India Service, and the usefulness of the work he may accomplish will in great measure depend upon the knowledge of botany which he has been forced to acquire in most instances in the early period of his medical studies. Dr. Aitchison collected 10,000 specimens, as naturalist to the Afghan Delimitation Commission, alone; and such a mass of vegetable products becomes a most valuable possession when preserved and studied, as they are, in such an institution as the Herbarium at Kew. Information is obtained of the highest value in economics as well as in the arts and sciences. And it might almost be demonstrated that this little-known adjunct to the numerous military expeditions sent into the lands of rebellious tribes on our borders is often the most fruitful part of it.

Mr. Hemsley, of the Kew Botanic Staff, was closely associated with Dr. Aitchison in the most important part of his botanical work, and published, in conjunction with him, the more strictly scientific portion of it; but that the botanic work accomplished by Dr. Aitchison was deemed worthy of high commendation is sufficiently attested by his selection in 1883 for the Fellowship of the Royal Society. He had already been elected Fellow of the Linnean Society in 1863; but in addition to these distinctions he was made Honorary Member of the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain. The Government, too, in recognition of his services, created him C.I.E. in 1883, and his own Alma Mater conferred upon him her LL.D. After his retirement from the Indian service he, in 1892, contested Clackmannan and Kinross in the Liberal Unionist interest, but without success.

Dr. Aitchison was a man of upright character and high principle. Having very pronounced views on many subjects he was ever ready to fight for them. He criticised fearlessly that which he believed to be wrong, even in the acts of his superiors; but his nature was a generous and affectionate one, and his greatest pleasure appeared to be in helping and pleasing others.

As a surgeon, and one who had come under the influences of such teachers and exemplars as Syme and Simpson, he was a bold and successful operator; and the natives with whom he came in contact in those remote countries where his work lay, soon learned to hold him in high esteem, for philanthropy mingled strongly with his other qualities. His loss will, however, be felt most by those who numbered him among their friends.

MAURICE DAVIS, M.D., J.P.

On Thursday, September 29th, 1898, at his residence, 11, Brunswick Square, Bloomsbury, in the 77th year of his age, Maurice Davis, M.D., J.P., peacefully passed away. He was born in Oxfordshire on October 8th, 1821, and entered King's College, London, as a matriculated student in May, 1849, and received the diploma of Associate of the College in 1852. In the same year he received all his medical qualifications: M.R.C.S. Eng., L.S.A. Lond., M.D. St. Andrews.

At King's College and King's College Hospital, he had a distinguished career, gaining the first prize in Medicine and the first prize in Clinical Surgery, the first certificate of honour, equivalent to the second prize in Surgery (the first prize being gained by the late John Whittaker Hulke, Presi-